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Corpsman to Attend White House Dinner

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From U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs



Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Max R. Rohn, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, will be representing Navy Medicine at a formal dinner at the White House this week. The dinner will honor Iraq War veterans and their families and is hosted by President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama.

The formal dinner, called “A Nation’s Gratitude,” will serve as an expression of the nation’s appreciation for the achievements and enormous sacrifices of Americans who served in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn, according to a statement released Feb. 6 by White House officials.

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'Once in a Lifetime Experience' Happening Again for Sailor

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From Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- A Navy hospital corpsman will repeat a self-proclaimed "once in a lifetime experience" at the White House, Feb. 29.

Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Max R. Rohn met President Barack Obama in June of 2009 when the commander in chief visited the former National Naval Medical Center (NNMC), now Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Rohn said he was "at a loss for words" during that experience.

"I was the first person in my family to meet a sitting president. It was definitely a once in a lifetime experience," Rohn said.

This week he proves himself wrong as he attends a dinner to honor Iraq War veterans and their families hosted by president and First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House.

The formal dinner, called "A Nation's Gratitude," will serve as an expression of the nation's appreciation for the achievements and enormous sacrifices of Americans who served in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn, according to a statement released Feb. 6 by White House officials.

Rohn will be one of nearly 80 service members invited to attend the dinner. The service members were selected to represent the American people who comprise the military, explained Pentagon officials. The service members, who come from all states and territories, include all ranks and services. They were selected to attend the dinner by a panel of the senior enlisted service members from each branch of the military, according to the Pentagon.

"I could not be more proud of HM3 Rohn's selection to represent Navy Medicine at the White House this week," said Vice Adm. Matt Nathan, U.S. Navy surgeon general and chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. "His selfless sacrifice and the courage he has displayed throughout his career and as a wounded warrior make him an exemplary representative for all Navy corpsmen."

Rohn will not only represent the Navy, but also service members and the people of Colorado, his home state. The 24-year-old comes from the city of Longmont, located in Boulder County. He joined the Navy in July 2007, "to be with the Marines."

He esaid in addition to the Marines, medical service is one of his passions. Before he joined the service, Rohn earned his emergency medical technician (EMT) certification and was a volunteer firefighter EMT after graduating from high school. Because Marines don't have medical personnel, he joined the Navy, became a hospital corpsman and member of the Fleet Marine Force serving with Marine Corps units, including the 2nd Marine Division, Camp Lejeune, N.C.

In January 2009, Rohn was deployed with Marines working as medic. His deployment was scheduled to last seven months.

Five months into his seven-month deployment, Rohn was injured in Fallujah, Iraq, May 2, 2009, when his Humvee was hit by a grenade.

After the blast, Rohn's first concern was for the other Marines in the vehicle, but he was the only one wounded in the attack. He gave himself first-aid and his team helped him to safety.

Rohn suffered devastating wounds to his legs. His right leg was more severely injured than the left.

He was medically evacuated to NNMC in May 2009 and underwent a series of surgeries on his right leg as part of a limb salvage effort.

For two years and three months, efforts were made to save Rohn's leg. "It didn't take, so we amputated in August," he said.

Rohn has not let the amputation of his leg stop him from achieving his goals. He is currently preparing to compete in his second Warrior Games in late April and early May, with hopes of going to the Paralympics Games in late August and early September.

At this year's Warrior Games, he will compete in the 30k cycling race, wheelchair basketball and Paralympics volleyball.

Last year, he competed in the same events at the Warrior Games, but because of issues with his leg due to recent surgery, he wasn't up to full strength.

"This year, I'm back to full strength and I anticipate doing very well," said the former high school football and ice hockey player.

In the more immediate future, Rohn said he is looking forward to the White House dinner. He

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found out he was invited when he got a call from Master Chief Hospital Corpsman Rafael Felipe, operational readiness lead chief petty officer at WRNMMC.

"He said I was invited to an event, but didn't tell me where it was, when it was or what it was," Rohn recalled with a laugh. "I eventually found out what it was about a week later. It's a very prestigious honor.

"I am going stag and because I am going alone, the mother of a posthumously Medal of Honor recipient gets to go," Rohn said.

Rohn's mother, Bernice Rohn, has described her son as "just a warm, caring person."

He said his future plans include going to school study business and finance, possibly at the University of Southern California or Georgetown University.

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